Holocaust DBQ

Social Studies and English Language Arts

Grade 10

English Language Arts Standard 2: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression.

Social Studies Standard 2: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

Information Literacy Standard: Literary Response and Expression. Students will connect to and form personal meaning from literary and artistic works; create personal responses to literature through writing, speaking or artistic expression; make connections across works of literature, arts and technology; and make connections between literature and other disciplines.

**Historical Context**

The rise of the Nazi Party from 1933-1945 had a profound impact on the lives of many people throughout Europe. Innocent people including over a million children suffered at the hands of the Nazis.

**Task**

You have spent the semester learning about the Holocaust through nonfiction textbooks in Social Studies. You have read an historical fiction novel, The Boy in the Striped Pajamas by John Boyne depicting life during the holocaust, in English. Consider what you have learned in Social Studies about the Holocaust, reflect on the historical fiction you have read in English, and examine the primary documents below related to that historical period. Connect your existing knowledge and the information presented in these documents to answer the following questions.

**Umbrella Question**

What is the danger in people focusing on their differences instead of their common humanity?

**A view of the camp commandant's house in Belzec. (1940 - 1944)**



Photograph from the Main Commission for the Investigation of Nazi War Crimes,

courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.

**Auschwitz Picture: Barracks and Electrified Fence of Auschwitz**



(Picture from the Main Commission for the Investigation of Nazi War Crimes, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.)

A fence around the barracks in the main camp of Auschwitz (Auschwitz I). (After January 1945)

1. Compare and contrast the living conditions in the commandant’s home and inside the concentration camp.
2. How are Bruno and Shmuel’s lives different and how are they the same?
3. Why does Bruno feel like a prisoner when he lives in relative luxury in a commandant’s home?

**Auschwitz Picture: The Double Electric Fence of Auschwitz**

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(Picture from the Philip Vock Collection, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.) View of the camp's double, electrified, barbed wire fence and barracks. (Immediately after liberation January 1945)

1. What barriers, both physical and non-physical, stand between Bruno and Shmuel?
2. The author, John Boyne, writes, “Fences like this exist all over the world. We hope you never have to reach such a fence.” What does the author mean by this?
3. What life-changing decision has Bruno reached when he decides to crawl under the fence and join his friend?

**Auschwitz Picture: Jewish Children in Auschwitz**



(Picture from the Central State Archive of Film, Photo and Phonographic Documents, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.)

STILL FROM A POSTWAR SOVIET FILM: Jewish children, kept alive in the Auschwitz II (Birkenau) concentration camp, pose in concentration camp uniforms between two rows of barbed wire fencing after liberation. (After January 27, 1945)

1. Why do think Bruno went unnoticed on the wrong side of the fence simply by changing his hair and clothing?
2. How would the Nazis have felt if they had known that an Aryan boy had inadvertently been gassed?
3. Bruno’s Grandmother told him “You wear the right outfit and you feel like the person you’re pretending to be”*.*  How could things have been different if the German people had each spent a day wearing “striped pajamas”?